

TREASURE

OUR

alabama

COASTS

and

ESTUARIES

ALABAMA'S COASTLINE IS MORE THAN JUST A MAJOR TOURIST ATTRACTION. FOR RESIDENTS, IT'S A WAY OF LIFE. IN SOUTHERN BALDWIN COUNTY, THE TOURISM INDUSTRY PROVIDES OVER 40,000 JOBS AND GENERATES OVER \$1 BILLION ANNUALLY. THE STATE'S 21,000 ACRES OF COASTAL WETLANDS AND 400,000 ACRES OF BAYS AND ESTUARINE WATERS ARE VITAL TO COMMERCIAL AND RECREATIONAL FISHING INDUSTRIES, AND THE PORT OF MOBILE WAS RANKED 16TH IN THE NATION IN TOTAL CARGO TRADE IN 1999. THE COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT ACT (CZMA) PROVIDES THE FRAMEWORK NECESSARY TO SUSTAIN THE ECONOMIC AND ECOLOGICAL VALUE OF THESE COASTAL AREAS. THIS LAW, WHICH IS ADMINISTERED BY THE NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION (NOAA), RECOGNIZES A NATIONAL INTEREST IN OUR COASTAL AND OCEAN AREAS. IT ALLOWS STATES AND TERRITORIES, NOT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, TO DETERMINE HOW BEST TO BALANCE CONSERVATION OF THE COASTAL ENVIRONMENT WITH HUMAN USES THAT DEPEND ON COASTAL RESOURCES.

THE CZMA IN ALABAMA

The CZMA establishes two programs to balance the use and protection of America's coasts. The Coastal Management Program gives states a flexible framework to address a broad range of community development, economic, and natural resource issues at the state and local level. The National Estuarine Research Reserve System protects key coastal areas for long-term scientific study, education, and resource stewardship.

Alabama Coastal Area Management Program

Approved: 1979

Lead Agencies: Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Department of Environmental Management

The Alabama Coastal Management Program strives to balance preservation, enhancement, and development of coastal resources while promoting a sustainable economy in the Alabama coastal area. With escalating population growth and ensuing development in coastal counties, the program is focusing its attention on: 1) strategies to lessen development pressure in environmentally sensitive areas, 2) protecting coastal wetland resources that serve as important habitat for fish and shellfish and game and non-game animals, 3) alleviating cumulative impacts to water quality and habitat degradation, and 4) other

miles of coastline
607

coastal population in 2000
540,258

fy03 czma core (section 306)
funding
\$1,597,000

fy03 czma enhancements
(section 309) funding
\$105,000

fy03 coastal nonpoint
implementation
\$94,000

fy03 national estuarine research
reserve operations, education,
monitoring and stewardship
\$555,000



considerations for ensuring the protection of Alabama's coastal resources and waters commensurate with other state agencies, local governments and non-profit organizations.

The Alabama Coastal Program's accomplishments include:

- *planning and implementing the congressionally authorized Coastal Impact Assistance Program to assist Alabama with mitigating environmental impacts related directly or indirectly to Outer Continental Shelf oil and gas production;*
- *initiating an educational program for local, county, and state government officials interested in understanding the causes and effects of nonpoint source pollution and land use activities;*
- *sponsoring active Adopt-a-Beach, Coastal Cleanup, and Boaters' and Anglers' campaigns that give citizens and stakeholders an opportunity to take an active role in keeping the coasts and beaches clean each year;*
- *supporting the Sea Turtle Volunteer Program through the Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge, which engages both local residents and seasonal tourists in the identification and monitoring of sea turtle nests along the Alabama Gulf coast until the hatching season is ended; and*
- *producing (through a contract with the University of South Alabama) an annual State of the Beaches report which provides the information needed to engage in current beach and erosion management efforts and to direct future planning.*

Alabama's National Estuarine Research Reserve Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve

Designated: 1986

Lead Agency: Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

Weeks Bay is a small embayment within Mobile Bay that is a critical nursery for fish and shellfish. Most of the commercial seafood species caught in the state spend at least part of their lives in an estuary.

RESEARCH: In an effort to learn more about the natural character of Alabama's estuaries, the reserve operates water quality monitoring stations and automated weather stations. Other research initiatives focus on restoration, habitat change, land use, and various impacts on the natural systems of Weeks Bay. Graduate Research Fellows are studying water quality in the reserve and effects of polluted runoff leading to sedimentation and nutrient pollution.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH: Educational activities include field trips, workshops, and outreach programs for school groups. The Coastal Training Program provides information for coastal decisionmakers.

PARTNERSHIPS IN ACTION

Alabama's watersheds are at risk of flooding and declining water quality from polluted runoff. Using the Dog River watershed as an example, the coastal program brought together partners from federal, state, and local organizations to develop a plan to reduce flooding and improve water quality in the area. This management plan was based on the input of stakeholders in the watershed and was completed through the cooperation of several groups, including the Weeks Bay Watershed project, an initiative of the Weeks Bay Reserve. Since the completion of the Dog River Watershed Management Plan, it has served as a model for other areas. The Weeks Bay Reserve continues to assist in this process.